

SCOURGE

Vrisha ♥ Terezi
Fanzine



LOVERS

we've never had the easiest time (we've got more days to get it right)

By Megan Jacobs

The sky is as gray as it always is, perpetually stuck in what could have been called dusk or dawn, once, worlds away from this one. You stand on the sidewalk, carefully watching the insect at your feet.

For a moment, you think about Terezi and how she'd make fun of you - but she's sound asleep in the hive at your back. Other than this stupid bug, you have nothing to worry about.

In the end, you weren't as important as you thought you'd be.

You *tried* important. You tried important when you caused the creation of Jack Noir and the destruction of Lord English. You tried important when you secured the creation of Earth C, too, and all it took were a couple of depressed humans to fuck that up for everyone.

Speaking of depressed humans – you're not exactly sure what went down with Dirk Strider. All you know is that he's alive and remorseful.

Frankly, you don't give a shit about that loser. You also don't give a shit about Ultimate Selves or narrative relevance or whatever else he and Rose and others won't shut the fuck up about.

You tried important. You *were* important. Now, you're just tired.

You don't know what kind of bug it is. With this clusterfuck of a planet – something ecologically between Alternia and Earth and allowed to develop on its own – the bug may be as alien to the humans as it is to you.

It's missing one of its legs. The remaining back leg is thin and bent upward.

You don't know how long you watch as it moves in circles, but you do know that the sound it makes as you crush it under your foot is almost a satisfying one.

When you finally caught up to Terezi – having chased her to the end of the universe just as she had done for you – neither of you really knew what to say to each other.

And what *is* there to say? There aren't enough words in Paradox Space to describe all the ridiculous ways that you and Terezi are tied together. Even on this planet, when you lie next to her on the bed in your shared hive, words don't come easy. It's much easier to chase away insecurities by pressing your lips to hers.

Sometimes, though, it all gets to be a little too much.

As you lift your foot up and away, the insect crunches again. You barely register the sound; it takes you a full eight seconds to realize what you've done. By then, your heart is racing.

A wave of nausea hits you. Some of its guts are spilling out of its side – some no doubt stuck to the bottom of your shoe – but the thing is surprisingly intact. You think that you see one of its antenna twitch.

Your breath comes in short bursts, and you're as panicked as you are perplexed. The thought of someone seeing you like this – losing your shit over a fucking bug – has you careening toward hysterics.

The sound of your own blood in your ears is so loud that you almost don't hear the door to your hive slam shut.

A few seconds of stillness pass. Then, Terezi calls out to you, sounding amused, "Vriská?"

You open your mouth to respond, but the words don't come. The bug still captures your gaze. It's like the little bastard has complete control over you.

Terezi's steps are slow as she approaches. Soon, you hear her stop entirely - she must sense that something is off. Cautiously, she calls your name again. When you still don't answer, she takes another few steps toward you.

Even though you can feel her come to a stop just a few inches behind you, you're still startled when she wraps her arms around your waist. Your breath catches in

your throat, but you manage to stop the jolt that threatens to run through your body.

The bug lies in front of you. With her head and nose pressed against your back, Terezi doesn't seem to notice it.

Terezi takes a breath; but before she can say your name again, you ask, "Was I the bad guy?"

You wince at the sound of your voice. It sounds strained – it sounds weak. You puff out your chest, trying to summon some of your usual bravado.

Terezi doesn't ask where the hell that question came from. You don't offer an explanation.

Still, you grow anxious and impatient in the time Terezi takes to answer your question. "Well?" you demand. To your relief, it comes out on just the right side of self-assured.

Terezi still takes a moment to respond. The pause is long enough to have your heart working double time, but you manage to maintain a brave face.

"No," Terezi says eventually, decisively. "You did bad things. And good things." She shifts on her feet; for a moment, you're worried she's about to let go of you. But her grip only tightens as she says, "And you were hurting."

Even with Terezi acting as an anchor, her words have you feeling off-balance and vulnerable. You want to be angry at her, but you can't summon up the energy. You're too tired.

It's surprisingly easy to swallow your pride long enough to say, "That's not an excuse."

Terezi's response is immediate, this time. "No," she says. "It's not." She sighs into your back. "But I know you. And I know you're not bad."

Just like that, the knot in your stomach gives a little. Terezi doesn't offer you anything else, but what she *has* given you is enough. You turn in her arms so that you can hug her properly.

Terezi lets out a huff of laughter when you visibly relax. Her breath ghosts over your neck and tickles the hair there. You lean into her, managing to not be too embarrassed about your quick venture into freaking the fuck out over a goddamn bug.

After a long pause, Terezi clears her throat. "You know," she starts, then stops. A beat passes before she says, "Sometimes I still think that I need you way more than you need me."

Unthinkingly, you say, "That's stupid."

"I know!" she says, hiding her face in the crook of your arm. "But I still think that sometimes. Even if it's stupid."

You think that you understand what she's getting at. You bring up your hands to grip her shoulders and gently move her away so that you can look at her. The bug lies between you two once again, but you manage to keep your eyes away.

“Terezi,” you say, grave, “You are the coolest troll I’ve ever met.” And then, because you’re still Vriska, “You’re definitely cooler than all those dumb humans, too.”

“Hey!” Terezi protests, pulling away slightly.

Offended, you drop your hands from her shoulders. “What? They’re losers!”

“They’re *sweet* losers,” she says, “And you know it.”

You scoff, but you don’t argue with her.

Terezi grins at your silence. “I know you like them,” she teases.

You flick her in the forehead. Her grin doesn’t waver, though, and you groan.

“I don’t like them, dumbass,” you say, “I like *you*. And I would hate to rag on your dumb friends, since you’re such a sap!”

Something about your words makes Terezi’s face goes soft. Your hands twitch.

You’ve never really known what to do with the kind of look that Terezi’s giving you, so you do what you *do* know how to do – you kiss the girl. She sighs through her nose, and you can’t help but smile against her lips.

When you pull away, Terezi says, “And *I’m* the sap.”

You roll your eyes and prepare a snappy response, but you see something out of the corner of your eye that has you stopping short.

The fucking bug.

You realize a little too late that Terezi's deep inhale is a result of her trying to figure out why the fuck you suddenly decided to stare at the ground. You look up just in time to see the corners of her mouth tug downward.

Terezi's always been clever; you know that she knows what you're thinking about. You don't need to explain yourself.

Instead, you watch silently as Terezi bends down. You watch as she picks up the dead bug. You watch as she-

-eats it. She eats the fucking bug. *What the fuck.*

"What the fuck."

"What?" Terezi asks, as if eating a dead bug off the ground is a perfectly normal thing to do. It's hard to tell if she's trying to mess with you or trying to make you feel better when she adds, "It's just a bug."

She smiles at you. There are little flecks of bug parts wedged between her sharp teeth.

"You're fucking disgusting."

Terezi doesn't respond. Then, her smile turns mischievous.

You back away as she moves forward.

"Terezi," you warn.

“Vriska,” she returns, all faux innocence. She takes another step toward you. You take a step back.

“Don’t you dare-“

She launches herself at you, tackling you to the ground. You shriek as she straddles you and plants kisses all over your face with her gross bug mouth.

You flail your arms, but it’s futile. When did Terezi get so strong?

“Get away from me!” you shriek. She decides to respect your wishes – but only after she kisses you square on the mouth. You sputter indignantly while Terezi cackles at the distress that *she* inflicted.

Still, you accept her hand when she offers it. With a little help, she hauls the two of you off the ground.

When you’re up, she doesn’t let go, and neither do you.

You brush the dirt off the back of your pants with your free hand. Once you feel like you’ve regained some of your dignity, you declare, “I fucking hate you.”

And those aren’t the right words at all, but Terezi’s giving you that soft look again. Your heart rate picks up once more – this time, though, it doesn’t feel like an oncoming panic attack. This time, there’s a different kind of tightness in your chest. You squeeze her hand.

A light, teal blush dusts over Terezi’s face and you feel another wave of affection for your oldest friend. There are more words at the tip of your tongue – maybe

even the *right* words – but you swallow them down. All you can do is give her hand another squeeze.

But that's alright. After all, you two have plenty of time.

AMORE ANTICO, AMICA MIA

AMORE RADIO
NOSTALGIA

IO NON TI PENSAI
QUASI MAI

TI HO DATO IN PASTO
AGLI AVVOLTOI

ALL'OLOCAUSTO
E AI MARINAI

AMORE ATOMICO
ENOLA GAY

AGLI
ALL'

E AI
AMO

EN

ORRORE AMICO,
ERRORE MIO

CHE NON TI HO DETTO
NEANCHE ADDIO

CHE NON TI HO DETTO
COME MAI

UNA
DOMENICA

BUTTAI
NEL CESSO

LA FOTOGRAFIA
IN CUI CI

STRINGEVAMO
FORTE

COLPA MIA

PERDUTO AMORE

ANIMA MIA

AMORE NONA

SINFONIA

VORREI SAPERE

COME STAI

SE COME SCRIVI

È TUTTO OK

E SE DAVVERO ORA LO SAI

CHE SONO DIVENTATO UN MOSTRO

COLPA TUA

SE COME SCRIVI

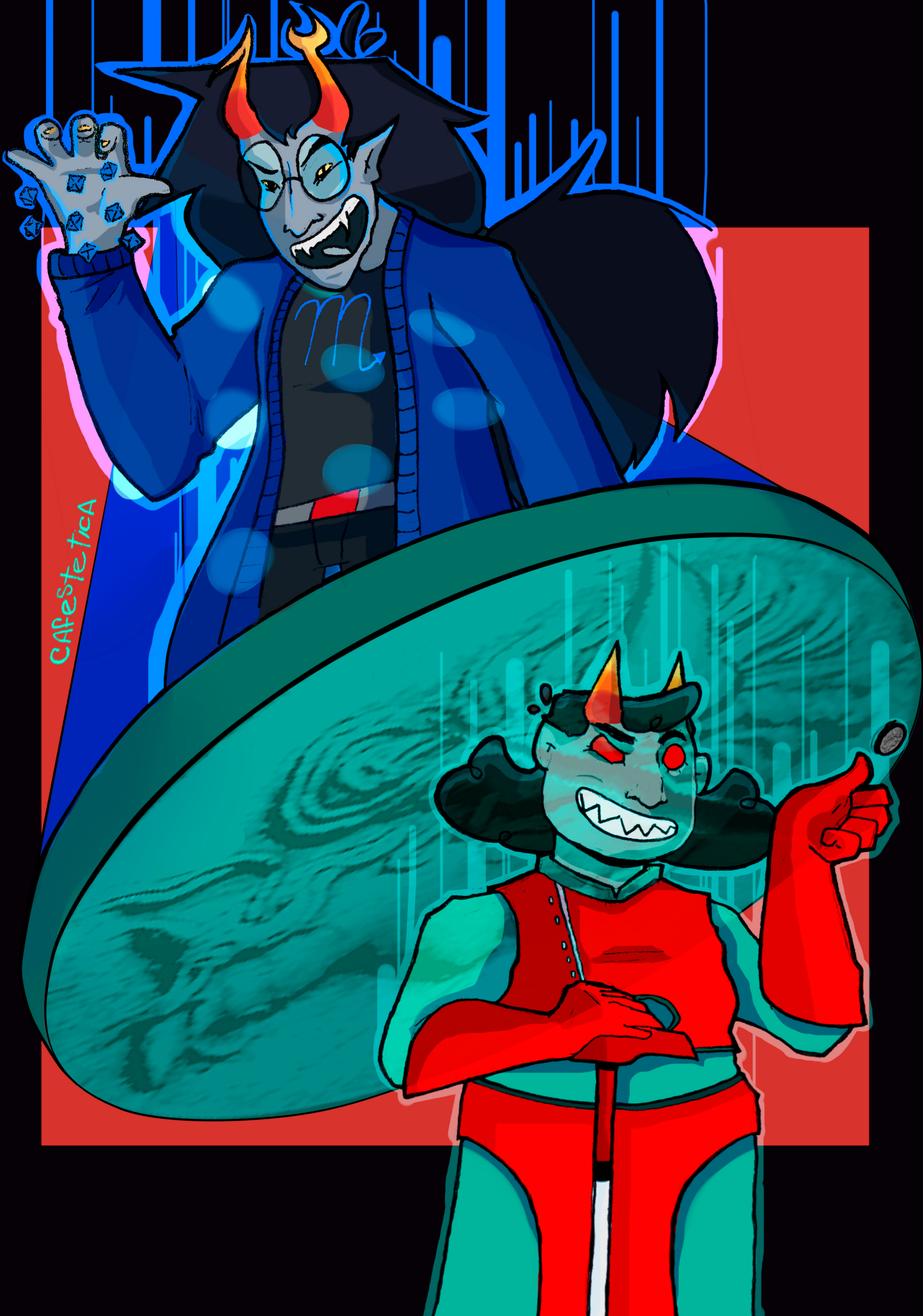
E S
ONC
P

CHE NIENTE DURA PER SEMPRE FIGURATI IO E TE









CAPESTETOA

















井田
小田
二〇一九



V.H.







The Difference Between Fate and Luck

By ali / jewisharadia

It is on the sunniest of days that Fate deems it appropriate to have her coin land heads first.

For sweeps, she has only been given tails. Tails at the seedy dive bar six sweeps ago, caught between an aging planet native and a criminal crony aiding in her objective's escape. Tails at the Intergalactic Leaders conference five sweeps, bleeding out in a stray bathroom as the criminal escapes. Tails yet again three sweeps and a day ago in the depths of an ancient temple on some planet on the very edges of the Alternian Empire, lost for weeks with only a sliver of hope at breaking out. Some might say the enemy had all the luck in the universe in the apple of her eye.

And some, like Terezi, don't believe in luck.

There is no such thing as luck. Luck is for people that don't have wits, for trolls that are foolish enough to believe that the world can be served at their feet simply by chance, on a whim from nobody and nothing at all. But Terezi knows better. She knows it takes work, effort, *determination* to get results. And some things, like failure, are simply what Fate has dictated the result to be. And for all these long, long sweeps, Fate has truly been the most cruel of mistresses.

But not today.

It's been sweeps since she's gotten this close to her. Sweeps since she's had the pleasure to even be on the same planet as her, let alone in the same city, and now here she is, unknowing of what lies in store for her.

Terezi takes a whiff of her coin one more time, just to make sure she'd smelled it right the first time. Oh yes, there's no mistaking the scratched side of this caegar. Heads is heads, and she is absolutely positive that today is the day that Vriska's will roll.

It's been three hours since she got here. Three hours lying in wait under the cover of an innocent cargo ship for the Fated moment. Yes, it's Fate that brought her to the bar a few nights ago, Fate that had one Tavros Nitram nervously sipping at frothing beetle juice in a corner so dim she had barely smelled him, and the rest Terezi had seized by her claws. There was no getting away from her tonight.

She takes out her palmhusk and tastes it hesitantly, scrolling through the feed Nitram had graciously given her (under duress). A private little update feed made just for Vriska's cronies, ready and waiting to aid their disreputable captain.

Marquise Returned tweeted: LOL!!!!!!! Just #lifted the galaxy's 8IGGEST royal jewel set ever. Check the link for price options, unless you're Legislacerator Pyrope. Hahahahahahaha :::;) ----> [troogle.com/88888888]

That, or make an illicit purchase outside the arms of the law.

She frowns at the screen, exasperated. Only criminals could be so stupid as to reveal their intentions so blatantly, private feed or not. True, Vriska had escaped her many a time, but she didn't become one of the top legislacerating practices in the Empire from sitting around willy nilly. She'd seized every clue with glee, had taken every case with fervor.

She licks her lips thoughtfully, tasting the black salt of her skin.

Something isn't right.

Vriska could never be this stupid. No, tactless, impulsive, stubborn, and temperamental perhaps, but so stupid as to reveal her location so thoughtlessly? To address her directly?

It could only mean one thing.

Terezi unsheathes her cane, the glint of the blade wafting up into her nostrils, an ice so cold it burns.

Her ambush had been compromised.

She rolls out from her cover, and begins to sprint. No time to notify her team, no time to think about the consequences of going in alone. There's only the impending fear of losing her, of missing her chance yet again, to grip those blueberry tinged hands in her own and bring them to justice.

The ship Vriska had been planning to steal lies untouched, drab and falling apart. Stupid. Stupid, stupid, stupid. She should have known. Never even in her most desperate moments had Vriska gone for anything less than a show.

Ship after ship, row after row, the hangar remains quiet in the late daylight hours. The only sound is her boots, pounding on the concrete, *clack-tap clack-tap clack-tap*. Not even a stray young native peeks out to check if they had locked up tight. Had she missed her? Was she too late in her stupidity? Had Fate cruelly ripped away Vriska from her yet again?

And then there she is, long, tangled hair--an array of black licorice--half covering her face as she fumbles with the wires of a grandiose vacationers' transport. All that Terezi can smell of her face is that mangled eye peeping out from behind the cover of her glasses.

Her sprint slows to a crawl, and then a halt as she approaches. At this point, there's no way Vriska is unaware of her presence. In her panicked rush, her footsteps had fallen to the ground in booming echoes, reverberating throughout the hangar.

She's almost insulted that Vriska feels so unafraid as to continue her foolish efforts rather than hide.

"Have you decided to surrender at last to the arms of law, Serket, or are you that comfortable in your ability to escape from my grasp?" she spits out. A calm floods the air, invading her nostrils with its soothing frothiness. And then giddiness, bubbling up from under them both. There is no fear in this moment, only excitement.

At last, they meet each other face to face once again.

Vriska laughs. It's ugly. It's always been an ugly laugh. Scratchy and shrill, the sound grates against Terezi's auricular drums, claws along metal, smug in its continued victory. "Pyrope, I was wondering when you were going to show up. You're usually way earlier than this."

"Justice is never late. It awaits the exact moment that a criminal's downfall will be the most sweet," Terezi snaps, irritated. She'd been here for hours. Vriska knows this as well as she.

"I think we both know that you don't believe that." Vriska smiles, all fangs, and stands. The wires fall from her fingers, sparks flying.

Thirty feet between them. The distance is short. Barely any length at all compared to the sweeps Terezi has been waiting for this. Her fingers twitch.

"But I do," she replies, all teeth. "Vriska Serket, Eight-handed Thief of the Twelve Alternian Galaxies, I, Legislacerator Terezi Pyrope, hereby call you to justice for your crimes against the Empire!"

Bang.

Vriska's pistol goes off faster than Terezi can react, and she only just dodges it as it grazes her cheek, stripping the skin from her face to reveal her blue raspberry filling. Then she's bolting, climbing the ship just out of her line of smell, peals of laughter echoing across the vaulted ceiling. *Damn it.*

Her muscles have her moving before her brain does, and she's going for the closest ship she can reach. She stumbles in her rush through its halls, reaching the cockpit and going for the engine wires as quickly as she can. Her claws snip and realign like a second nature--she's done

this before--and Vriska's voice echoes in the distance as her own ship begins to take flight. "A for Effort, Pyrope, but maybe try again next time!"

Snip snip spark. Snip spark. Snip.

The engine flares to life with a roar, boosters in the back lighting up Terezi's senses with wave after wave of sour orange and cinnamon red as the flames spark in the air. She can only hope that the computer's mainframe doesn't lock her out of the controls, a new piece of tech that had been installed with every helmsman recently.

Not that she does this often enough to know that.

Well, laws are bendable for justice anyway.

She guns the gas.

Vriska's ship looms in the distance, a seed in the lemony sky. The distance is massive, and if she pushes her ship hard enough... Well, Terezi will have to be the one to push first. Faster and faster, further and further, almost there almost there, and then she breaks the atmosphere, a rushing noise like a river echoing throughout the cockpit.

She can feel the ship trembling under the pressure of her haste. It groans and creaks with each burst she makes. If she's not careful, it'll give out on her. Crappy ship to pick, all things considered, but she's nearly there anyway. Besides, careful never got her anywhere.

In the distance, the faint glow of the planet's moon begins to emerge, a bright green, filled with life, the perfect backdrop to the blue of Vriska's soon-to-be demise.

Her claw flicks open the weapons system, tongue hastily perusing over the options before picking the one she likes best and slamming the button as hard as she possibly can. A crack echoes through the chamber, and a tiny, orange popsicle of a flare bursts forward.

It hits.

It... hits. She stares out from behind the glass in shock as the ship before her tumbles through space, smoke billowing from its surface. She can only imagine the frustrated screaming from within, the anger. The fear. The desperation.

If Vriska's even alive still.

The thought has her blood pusher seizing in her chest. She'll need her body as proof, won't she? How could His Honorable Tyranny possibly believe her word alone? Yes, she will need to follow the ship, down, collect the body, and--

Boom!

Smoke fills her nostrils and her lungs, smothering her in a world of greys and blacks and rich, red browns.

“Warning. Boosters are no longer operational. Warning. Landing gear is no longer operational. Warning. Autopilot is no longer operational. Warning. Weapons system is no longer--”

The ship trembles again. And then the sound of rushing air pushing past its outer walls fills the din in her auricular sponges. Louder and louder, the pressure against the walls growing tighter and tighter and tighter and the air is getting thinner and thinner and thinner--

She must have blacked out.

She’s not sure when she did, or how she survived the crash sprawled out on the floor like a useless worm, but she does know that her body aches in every area possible, and her lungs burn with each breath she takes of the fresh air. Everything beneath her is jagged and lumpy, and she thinks briefly that perhaps she is sitting atop a body.

She comes to a world of bright orange and sticky blue, and Vriska’s voice echoing her the canals of her aural. “Pyrope? Pyrope, hey, hey there... Terezi?”

The only response she’s capable of is a loud groan, and she quickly covers her nose, turning her face away. “What are you wearing?” she wheezes after a moment.

Vriska scoffs loudly, distaste evident in her voice, and she hears her pull away. “Some jumpsuit I found on the ship. My outfit got all fucked up in the crash.”

“Under normal circumstances I would request a taste of the fabric, but as it is I do not think I’m capable of handling its sweet and too sour nature.” She coughs pathetically, as if to emphasize the point. Her lungs truly feel like Alternia at midday. “Too bright,” she tacks on as a last minute thought.

“Okay, like I had any other options,” Vriska says, exasperated, and a hand swirls in front of her nose. “Do you want help up or not?”

“A Legislascerator does not accept the help of wanted criminals,” Terezi spits, and shifts to try and sit up, only to fall right back into the rubble of her ruined ship. Or, whoever’s ship this was that she had borrowed.

Cold skin meets her own, and she feels herself being hefted up anyway. She’s too tired to even protest, but swipes her hand away as soon as she’s able to stand steady on her feet. She fumbles for her cane, thankfully strapped securely at her side, and draws her blade. Regretfully,

the moment is ruined in its need for repetition. The dramatic flair that makes the entire endeavor worth it has been completely lost, but regardless of such a tragedy, justice must always be served. "Vriska Serket, Eight-handed Thief of the Twelve Alternian Galaxies, I, Legislacerator Terezi Pyrope, hereby call you--"

"Blah, blah blaaaaaaaah," Vriska says, and really she should have expected such an interruption--its par for the course--but her mouth drops open all the same, like an intern fresh from the surface of Alternia. A hatchling.

"Look Pyrope," Vriska continues, breezing right along, "let's be honest with ourselves here. We just fucking crashlanded into a green wasteland with little to no hope of a rescue if we don't find a way out of... this." Terezi spares a sniff here and there, and through the lateness of the hour realizes that yes, this is very much a wasteland of bland spinach greens and olive yellows. There isn't the smooth latte smell of concrete or the acrid dust of power lines anywhere near them. "Is now really the time to go blathering on about your 'justice?' We'll get out of here sooooooooo much faster if we team up for a bit. You know, like the old days."

Old days. Terezi grimaces. She does not like thinking about those in particular. Ever. Unfortunately, Vriska has a point. Fighting to the death would prove fruitless in a moment such as this, and in the end they would both die, whether from wounds, starvation, exhaustion, dehydration... the list goes on.

"Fine," she acquiesces through gritted teeth, and slowly sheathes her cane once again. This is the only realistic option, after all.

A grin spreads across Vriska's face, one Terezi knows only too well, and she begins picking through the rubble. "Great! Sisters, back at it again, huh?" she says, tossing a bent piece of metal out of the way.

"No, we are not going to be 'back' at anything," Terezi says, and already she feels like perhaps this was a mistake. "Except perhaps in the cold emptiness of space after this is all over."

"Alright, alright, calm down. Did law school suck the humor out of you, or what? It was a joke." Vriska snorts and tosses aside a still-sparking control panel.

"I think perhaps your life as a wanted criminal has bled yours dry. That, and any sense of the law that you had back on Alternia," Terezi snaps back, and begins to pick her way out of the rubble and to the warm chocolate of the free dirt. If she has to feel the bits of metal poking through her boots and into her feet for one more minute, she really will kill someone (being Vriska) right here.

"Law, schmaw," Vriska says, eye roll all but audible in her tone. "As if you ever cared for that shit anyway. Get off your high hoofbeast, maybe. Like, you just stole a fucking ship, Pyrope!"

"In the name of justice I happened to *borrow* it," Terezi says, emphatic.

"Oh yeah, and in the name of justice to my bank account, *I* stole the royal jewels of uh, whatever that planet was called, which, bee tee double you, are now missing because you fucking shot me out of *space*. So, you know, justice is, like, all in the eye of the beholder or whatever." Standing, Vriska gives her another look, a look so smug Terezi can taste the whipped cream of her teeth, and begins to trek her way out of the rubble as well.

"That is a poor excuse for petty thievery," Terezi says. "There is only one eye for the law, and that is the eye of His Honorable Tyranny."

"Not for me," Vriska says, coming to stand beside her. "I'd have two eyes for it, but someone blew one of mine up." She bares her teeth in another smile, but the taste is more like rotten yogurt than any whipped cream.

Terezi only grunts in response, and decides to ignore that jab. After all, had it not been deserved? Had she not been serving justice that night as she had been doing every other night since? "Let's just get this over with," she mutters, and begins to walk. She's not particularly sure where she's going, but at this point anywhere is better than a crash site.

"Hold on, Pyrope," comes Vriska's voice from behind her, and once again she feels a cold hand rest on her shoulder. The chill seeps through the fabric of her tattered clothes, and again she finds herself shifting away. It's a familiar chill, one that she'd walked hand in hand with in her adolescent days on the Alternia's surface, but it's not a chill that she can welcome any longer.

Vriska appears unphased by this and continues. "It's going to be daylight here soon, and while I don't actually care about keeping a consistent sleep schedule... might be smarter if we set up camp here and do the rest of our exploring during, you know, normal people hours."

Again, she has a point. Of all the unreasonable trolls to exist in the galaxy--hell, the universe--Vriska makes some unfortunately reasonable points. Terezi gnashes her fangs together thoughtfully, trying somehow to disprove her, but her sponge comes up completely blank.

"Also, we just fucking crashlanded," Vriska tacks on. "I'm *pooped*."

"Fine," she says for the second time, and thinks that maybe her posture pole could use a nice soft bed of leaves to recline against. Her entire body aches, and she's positive that somehow, somewhere she has to be bleeding.

They set up camp. It's a long and arduous process--much more than she had ever expected it to be--and at some point Terezi finds herself putting together a small shelter made of broken

bits of metal and sticky green alien leaves while Vriska sits back and gives her directions. To which Terezi sincerely calls her out on her still prodigious bullshit, and they finally finish the small shelter together just as the light of day begins to peak over the horizon.

She feels the exhaustion deep in her bones now--the weight of the chase, the crash, and the sincere lack of sleep for what had to have been a night and a half at this point. She'd started this whole endeavor midday on the planet, and had somehow ended up here on its moon, the day just barely beginning. She wants nothing more than to sleep.

Vriska lies back on the pile of leaves they'd collected, looking far too comfortable for her own good. "Well, I think we can call it a day," she says, all fangs, and turns her back to Terezi, already curling up for sleep. "Sleep tight, Pyrope."

"Don't be getting too comfortable, Serket," Terezi warns, but leaves it at that. As much as she wants to sleep, she has a job to keep up, and if Vriska is the same as she was six sweeps ago, this spider won't let an opportunity to escape go untaken.

Besides, what good was attempting to sleep without at least a little sopor? They'd searched for far too long in the wreckage, desperately hoping for a slim chance of luck that a portable packet had survived the fall, but to no avail. Not a singular drop had made it through.

She settles back, situating herself in just enough discomfort to keep herself awake and alert. Stray branches beneath the leaf pile poke and prod at her bruised body, the exact opposite of a warm and goopy recuperacoon of sopor. Perfect.

The day passes without event. Minute by minute, hour by hour, the light of day slowly moves its way across the crash site, illuminating all of its various flavors. Vriska stirs only once and it's to turn to face Terezi in her sleep. It's strange, mostly--to be so close to a target that she put sweeps worth of blood, sweat and admittedly the occasional tear into, but still unable to hold her tightly in her grasp. It's stranger still for Vriska to be with her at all in such a peaceful manner. It takes her back to when they were younger, fresh from the brooding caves and making a name for themselves on the surface of Alternia. Fooling around and being the grubs they were, extra legs or not.

Exhaustion creeps further still into her very organs the further the day goes along, and just as the shadows reach the edges of the clearing, her eyes begin to droop, heavy with the weight of her troubles, and she drifts off to Vriska's sleeping face.

Evening comes in a flurry of fear as she bolts upright to an empty shelter. The spot beside her has long since warmed in Vriska's absence and in a panicked rush, she scrambles outside. The smell of blueberry is long gone. Not even a drop of blood or a patch of skin catches her nose.

Stupid.

Yes, Fate had said it was time to come close, yes, Fate had given her the opportunity to at last grasp Vriska by the throat, yes, this had been her chance to bring Vriska to justice at last, but had she taken it? Had she even considered not listening to the sweet blueberry wine of Vriska's words? Had she, like so long ago, been lulled into a sense of security, because once upon a time they had been friends? Because once upon a time they were almost something more?

Stupid.

She picks up a stray piece of metal, furious with herself, and chucks it as hard as she can into the distant foliage. Far, far away, just as she had thrown away her chance at Vriska.

"Wow, someone woke up on the wrong side of the recuperacon," comes a voice, and Terezi nearly leaps out of her skin as Vriska approaches from behind her.

"What?" Vriska says, knowing smile curving the edges of her lips. She holds up a rather large and very dead rodent. Breakfast. "Did you think I'd really high-tailed it by myself? I'm not *that* bad."

She feels her cheeks warm as blood rushes to them in embarrassment--and anger. It's not just embarrassment, anger is definitely there, too. "You *are* that bad," she says, and swipes the rat from Vriska's hand.

"Okay, okay. I'm definitely that bad, but you would totally do the same thing, and you know it."

Terezi remains silent, instead plopping to the ground below--ow, her butt--and begins to skin the rat, careful not to shave off any of its meat. She is not going to have this conversation with Vriska. Not right now, and not ever.

Vriska's expression sours, twisting up like she's just tasted the juiciest of lemons, and begins to meander around the camp. Gathering wood for a fire, Terezi assumes. "Calm down, alright," she says, clearly irritated. "It would be stupid to go off without you right now, anyway. Damn."

They eat the rat in silence, the tension between them as thick as a warm, chocolatey cake. Terezi can feel Vriska's frustration, the desire to say something, but she's holding back, keeping whatever biting comment she has tucked neatly behind her fangs. She can only assume that it will come out eventually. She knows Vriska too well to think she would ever hold back for long.

"I spotted smoke coming from that direction," Vriska says as they pack up camp, pointing eastward. There are no lies to taste in her speech, so Terezi only nods along. From this point onward, she needs to keep herself as professional as possible. Cool, reserved, level-headed. Anything else is going to get her killed, or worse, she'll lose Vriska.

Pace as brisk as the evening air, they set off.

It's quiet for the first few hours--Vriska, clearly sulking about that morning, Terezi keeping things professional and distant. The air presses around them, humidity denser and more obtrusive than during the daylight hours. Insects swirl around them, buzzing in their faces and at their necks.

The tension builds.

The words tucked neatly under Vriska's tongue begin to come out, push against her lips minute by minute, hour by hour, until at last when the smoke draws no closer than it had hours ago, she says, "So, just in case you were wondering, my stomach healed up pretty nicely after you stabbed me all those sweeps ago."

Terezi feels her own nutrition sac twist. "Obviously," she replies.

There's quiet again, aside from the snapping of branches and crunching of leaves under their boots. "How can you act like that, after everything we've been through together?" Vriska finally bites out, and the words taste like acid on Terezi's tongue.

"Act like what?" she responds just as coolly. It would do no good to have this conversation. It was fruitless if Vriska continued to decide to go against Alternia, to bask in the gluttonous riches of the criminally inclined, to--

Vriska punches her square in the nose.

It sends her sprawling backward, where she lands flat on her ass, and then Vriska's on top of her, ready to punch her again. But she's ready this time and punches first, the sensation of crushing chiton flaring out across her knuckles in a brilliant arc of fiery orange pain.

"Bitch," Vriska spits at her, and some of it lands on her cheek, blueberry with blood. "We were a *team*, Terezi. You and I, the Scourge of Alternia, the queens of the fucking planet. *Sweeps* of that together, and you just *left* me."

"Left you?" Terezi says, and an anger wells up deep inside her chest, boiling in the pit of her nutrition sac until it becomes too hot to be contained and comes upward through her windpipe in a furious eruption. "*Left you?* Vriska, you killed our friend, you had her *burned alive* and then you *burned my eyes*, too. What the fuck did you think I was going to do? Forgive you for that and go back to playing games with you?"

"No," Vriska says, and suddenly there's a strange emotion in her voice, a crack in the glass of arrogance. Anger? Regret? She presses her iron grip deeper into Terezi's shoulder. "But don't

act like you're morally above me when I know for a fact you've done things just as fucking awful. I've *watched* you do things just as awful."

"They were strangers and criminals," Terezi says, and a snarl curls at her lip. "It was *justice*."

A laugh explodes from Vriska, and she throws back her head, black licorice hair tossing backward in the night sky. "Justice?" she says. "How fucking stupid did law school make you? Knock knock, is anyone fucking there?" She raps her knuckles against Terezi's forehead mockingly. Terezi can only shove at her fruitlessly. Blueblood strength is blueblood strength. "Your sense of justice is about as fake as that processed shit they have to sell in the fourth quadrant, Pyrope. *Fake*."

"Just because your sense of right and wrong is skewed does not mean mine is," Terezi snaps, and throws another punch, thrusting Vriska off her with the shock of the impact. She scrambles to her feet hurriedly, and grips the cherry head of her cane, ready to pull her blade. Vriska only stares at her, dazed from the blow, singular eye staring back at her, a simmering sapphire. "All the things I've done, Vriska, have been in the name of justice. What you did wasn't justice, not in any world, not even yours. You killed our *friend*."

"What do you want? A fucking apology?" Vriska says, and she spits again, just to the side. "An apology isn't going to bring Aradia back, and it's not going to magically give you back your eyesight either. It's not going to do anything. Stabbing me through the back and into my stomach sure fucking didn't, either. It just made us even."

"It was *justice*," Terezi says, and feels somewhat like a broken record.

"Justice, justice, justice," Vriska says mockingly, sneering. "What the fuck did that justice do for you, Terezi? Make you feel like you had the moral high ground? Make you feel oh-so good about yourself and your morals? Bullshit. What I did to you and Aradia and Tavros is what we call 'getting back.' What you did to me is the same fucking thing. What you've continued to do to me is the same thing." She points at her eye, hidden behind the blacked out frame of her glasses. The eye that Terezi had burned away when they were still surfacebound. "And now we're even, aren't we? I haven't messed with any of our former friends, or even our current ones since then. I fucked up then, yeah, sure, but its been sweeps. Sweeps. And you just can't let me go."

"You are a criminal, even now," Terezi says, hoarsely, and feels a bit like a broken record. "You rob, you steal, you murder, you--"

"And so do you, Legislacerator Pyrope. You murder civilians that get in your way, you steal space ships because its faster to get the job done, you hang innocent people every fucking night of your life because that's just by the book. There is *nothing* justified about what you do

except that you have His High Tyranny and Her Imperious Condescension at your back. You're about as fucked up as me, sister." Vriska smiles, mouth stained blue with her blood.

A scream rips from her throat, and she lunges at Vriska, the weight of every emotion coursing through her body pushing at the hilt of her blade. Anger, hate, terror, grief, excitement--only Vriska could unravel her like this, only Vriska could get down to her core and strip her bare. Every word she says is right, every angry accusation a dagger cracking her open. It scares her, terrifies her how right Vriska is.

And it hurts.

Vriska dodges and slams a punch into her cheek again, hard enough that she drops her cane and collapses to the forest floor again. But Vriska doesn't pin her down this time, doesn't do anything but stand above her, breathing heavily, tears streaking down her face in tiny rivulets of blood and water.

"Don't get me wrong," she says. "I love what we do. The only time I feel alive is when you're on my tail. The adrenaline rush when I know it's you..." Vriska shrugs, and wipes at her mouth. Old lipstick and blood smear away. "Just like the good old days, I guess, when we used to FLARP, but you know, we had each other's backs instead of trying to stab them."

Terezi stands up, rubbing her nose in a similar manner. The world is smeared in the smell of her blood now, tinges of electric blue raspberry muddying Vriska's face and the grass beneath her feet. She picks up her cane once more, oh-so-slowly. Blood thunders in her skull. Yes, this is the only time she ever feels alive. This is the only time that she isn't bored out of her mind. This is the only thing that has ever felt real to her.

Vriska.

But even if Vriska is right, she can hardly give her that satisfaction, hardly allow the swelling of her ego to go unchecked like that, so she lunges once again. Vriska doesn't try to dodge, doesn't move at all, just smiles at her, a triumphant smirk, and Terezi knows that somehow she's said everything without saying a thing.

She cuts her across the cheek. Just deep enough that it hurts, but shallow enough that there's no real danger, and Vriska laughs. She laughs and laughs and laughs and laughs, and then she's falling to the ground, Terezi falling right along with her, and something inside her laughs too. It's hysteria, she knows it. Probably. Just like in those old detective films, when the villain finally gets into the heroine's head, breaks her, and in such a moment of crisis, she is expected to find her sanity once again and pursue the antagonist once more. Because that is her duty. And that is justice.

But.

Terezi thinks maybe this feels too good to be a crisis.

She turns on her side at the same time Vriska does. They stare at each other for a long moment, quiet. And then Vriska scoots a little closer, tangling leaves and dirt into her hair, and presses a kiss--angry, heavy, exciting, furious--onto Terezi's mouth. And she kisses back--angry, heavy, exciting, furious, and *alive*.

They break apart.

"You're a bitch," Terezi says.

"Tell me something I don't know."

"It is unfortunately kind of hot."

"Again, something I don't know."

"Shut up."

"You're not going to stop chasing me, are you?"

"No."

They both smile.

"Good."

THANKS FOR R34DING!!!!!!!

